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DEPT FOR SCA/FO (BOUCHER, GASTRIGHT), SCA/A
DEPT PASS AID/ANE
DEPT PASS USGS (MEDLIN, MIRZAD)

E.O. 12958 N/A
TAGS: [EMIN](#) [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [PGOV](#) [AMGT](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: Supporting USGS Activities in Afghanistan

Ref: A) State 62343 B) State 61921

This message contains SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED information.
Please protect accordingly.

Action Request - see paras 1 and 7.

11. (SBU) Summary and Action Request: The Embassy has received two letters from President Karzai's senior staff requesting that a specific USGS official be appointed Senior Advisor to the Office of the President. Due to conflict of interest, perceived transparency, and Chief of Mission authority issues, this proposal is not acceptable to the Mission. We believe that USGS technical field teams have been doing excellent work in Afghanistan and their activities have added important value to the understanding and potential development of Afghanistan's natural resources sector. We would like these activities to continue and intensify. There have been some weaknesses as well. To strengthen USG engagement in Afghanistan's natural resources sector, the Mission proposes that the Department of the Interior and USGS consider establishing a Natural Resources Attache position at Embassy Kabul via the NSDD-38 process, which the Embassy would be favorably inclined to approve. End Summary and Action Request.

12. (U) The Ambassador received a letter dated April 25 (para 9) from President Karzai's Chief of Staff, M. Umer Daudzai, reiterating an earlier request for the detailing of USGS International Program Specialist and Engineer Geologist Said Hashim Mirzad as Senior Advisor for Natural Resources to the Office of the President. Attached to Daudzai's letter was the earlier request -- a January 2 letter (para 10) from then-Chief of Staff Jawed Ludin to then-Ambassador Neumann requesting Mr. Mirzad's appointment to the post in the Office of the President. Ludin had asked that the request for Mr. Mirzad's services be forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior. Embassy was unaware of the January 2 Ludin letter until it was received as an attachment to the April 25 Daudzai letter.

13. (SBU) Mission has given the Daudzai and Ludin requests due consideration and concluded that the appointment of a serving USG official to a senior position in the Office of the President of Afghanistan is not acceptable. Such an appointment would raise intractable conflict of interest issues for both the USG and the GOA. The Daudzai and Ludin proposal would also appear to place this USG official in Kabul outside of Chief of Mission authority, which would pose serious security as well as institutional difficulties. The appointment of a serving USG official to a senior policy position in the Office of the President of Afghanistan might also raise questions about transparency and undue USG influence among some GOA officials as well as the international community in Kabul. Were the USG official to resign from USG service, we would have no objection to his/her appointment to this position.

14. (SBU) The USG does have a handful of USG officials serving as technical advisors in the Afghan Ministry of Finance. These individuals, however, are providing purely technical assistance to strengthen the work of line agencies of the GOA. The position proposed by Daudzai and Ludin for Mr. Mirzad would be significantly different in that he would sit in a GOA office that has a central policy formulation role rather than a line implementation function. The USG has strategic, political, and economic/commercial interests in seeing the Afghan natural resources sector develop. On occasion, our interests do not coincide with the interests of the GOA and its officials. In such instances, a USG official also serving as Senior Advisor to the Afghan President, would be placed in an untenable conflict of interest situation. For instance, we would like to see U.S. companies play a leading role in the development of Afghanistan's natural resources. Currently, a major U.S. company is bidding on an international tender to develop significant copper deposits in Afghanistan. The arrangement proposed by Daudzai and Ludin would complicate our efforts to advocate on behalf of U.S. companies.

15. (SBU) That said, the Daudzai and Ludin request raises an important issue about the appropriate USG role in assisting the development of Afghanistan's natural resources and points to the need for an enhanced and direct USGS in-country presence. Embassy believes that Afghanistan's natural resources sector has excellent potential as an important platform for the medium to long-term development of the country. Embassy also believes that USGS has done a superb job at the technical level of supporting the Afghan natural resources sector as well as U.S. foreign policy interests in Afghanistan. The geospatial infrastructure assessment (including the airborne geophysics survey), the earthquake hazards assessment (including the Kabul seismic station project), the mineral resources assessment, the coal assessment, water resource assessment, and several training programs (including Ministerial capacity for dealing with tenders and contract negotiations) are examples where USGS expertise and initiative can potentially help reap important benefits for Afghanistan. Embassy is committed to supporting such work.

16. (SBU) Where USGS engagement in Afghanistan could do better, however, is in strengthening coordination with other USG elements and in integrating USGS activities into a cohesive USG strategy for the natural resources sector. Embassy and USAID have not received periodic status reports regarding USGS programs funded by USAID. Another aspect of the USGS engagement in Afghanistan is the logistical and administrative support demands, which remain difficult. The support has been provided by the Afghan Reconstruction Group at the Embassy but was supposed to have been taken over by USGS some time ago. On occasion, USGS personnel have proposed visits directly with PRT teams without anyone in the Mission being informed. USGS staff have also engaged directly with GOA Ministries and the Office of the President without keeping the Mission informed. Last fall, USGS staff prepared a visit for the Afghan Minister of Mines without coordinating the program with the Mission or the Department of State until we learned of it from the Ministry.

17. (SBU) Action Request: To strengthen our engagement in Afghanistan's natural resources sector, Embassy proposes that the Department of the Interior and the USGS consider establishing a permanent presence at Embassy Kabul via the NSDD-38 process, which we would be favorably inclined to support. The Natural Resource Attache position we envision would report through the Embassy's Economic Policy Group to the DCM and would serve as the focal point, secretariat, coordinator and support for all USG activity in the

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natural resources sector. The incumbent in this position would advise the DCM and the Ambassador as well as all USG agencies on matters relating to natural resources. The position would engage closely with the donor community and GOA agencies on natural resource issues, providing advice and technical assistance, assessing capacity needs and seeking resources to address these needs. The incumbent would provide the necessary status reporting to USAID for USGS technical field programs funded by USAID. This position would also coordinate and support all logistical arrangements for USG visits to Afghanistan that relate to natural resources.

18. (U) Septels will address Ref A and B requests for country clearance for the two proposed USGS visits.

19. (U) Text of Chief of Staff Umer Daudzai's Letter to Ambassador Wood, dated April 25, 2007:

H.E. William Broucher Wood
Ambassador of the United States
Embassy of USA
Kabul

25 April 2007

Excellency Ambassador,

Please find attached a copy of the letter which was signed by my predecessor regarding appointment of Mr. H. Mirzad as Senior Advisor to the office of the President on Mines and Natural Resources.

Once again I ask your excellency to convey this request to the U.S. Secretary of Interior at the earliest opportunity.

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Sincerely,

/s/

1 M. Umer Daudzai
Chief of Staff to the President
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

End Text of Daudzai Letter.

10. (U) Text of then-Chief of Staff Jawed Ludin's Letter to then-Ambassador Neumann, dated January 2, 2007:

H.E. Ronald Neumann
Ambassador of the United States to Afghansitan
Embassy of USA
Kabul

2 January 2007

Excellency,

Appointment of Mr. H. Mirzad as Senior Advisor to the Office of the President on Mines and Natural Resources
I would like to express gratitude towards the service of Mr. Said Hashim Mirzad, International Programs Specialist and Engineer Geologist who on behalf of the U.S> Department of Interior and and the U.S. Geological Survey has provided tremendous assistance to the Afghan government over the last two years.

As you are aware, in his latest capacity he has served the U.S> Embassy in Kabul from Feb 2004-Aug 2006 as Senior Natural Resources Advisor. In this role, Mr. Mirzad acted as a key liaison to numerous Afghan government ministries and institutions dealing with the natural resource sector. As an Afghan-American his grasp of the language, culture and knowledge of the environment has made his working relationship with such institutions most valuable.

Therefore, I would like to request that Mr. Mirzad's term be extended in Kabul and further that he serve specifically as Senior Advisor for Natural Resources to the Office of the President.

As the Afghan government reviews the preliminary results of the airborne geophysics study that the USGS has completed, we realize more than ever that Afghanistan has major potential in terms of its natural resources. Such studies prove our apparent need for the valuable expertise of highly qualified individuals such as Mr. Mirzad to support our government at the highest levels.

I would be grateful of you could convey this request to the Secretary of the Interior at the earliest opportunity. I hope he

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will be able to meet our need.

Sincerely,

/s/

Jawed Ludin
Chief of Staff
Office of the President

End Text of Ludin Letter.

Wood